UNITED NATIONS **A E**

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/49/263
E/1994/112
19 July 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Forty-ninth session
Item 12 of the preliminary list*
REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
Substantive session of 1994
Agenda item 5 (c)
SOCIAL, HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General

1. On 21 December 1993, the General Assembly adopted resolution 48/213, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian People", in which it, inter alia, took note of the report of the Secretary-General; expressed its appreciation to him for his rapid response and efforts regarding assistance to the Palestinian people; expressed its appreciation to the Member States, United Nations bodies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that have provided and continue to provide assistance to the Palestinian people; welcomed the results of the Conference to Support Middle East Peace, convened in Washington, D.C., on 1 October 1993; urged Member States, international financial institutions of the United Nations system, international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and regional and interregional organizations to extend, as rapidly and as generously as possible, economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people in order to assist in the development of the West Bank and Gaza, and to do so in close cooperation with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and

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* A/49/50/Rev.1.

through official Palestinian institutions; considered that an active United Nations role in assisting in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, including its annexes and agreed minutes (A/48/486-S/26560, annex), could make a positive contribution; called upon relevant organizations and agencies of the United Nations system to intensify their assistance in response to the urgent needs of the Palestinian people, and to improve coordination through an appropriate mechanism under the auspices of the Secretary-General; urged Member States to open their markets to exports from the West Bank and Gaza on the most favourable terms, consistent with appropriate trading rules; suggested the convening in 1993/94, under the appropriate United Nations auspices, of a seminar on Palestinian trade and investment needs in the light of the new developments; requested the Secretary-General to ensure the coordinated work of the United Nations system for an adequate response to the needs of the Palestinian people and to mobilize financial, technical, economic and other assistance; and also requested him to submit a report to the Assembly at its forty-ninth session, through the Economic and Social Council, on the implementation of the resolution, containing: (a) an assessment of the assistance actually received by the Palestinian people; and (b) an assessment of the needs still unmet and specific proposals for responding effectively to them.

2. Deeply conscious of the new challenges to the United Nations resulting from the mutual recognition between the Government of the State of Israel and the PLO and the signing by them of the Declaration of Principles on 13 September 1993, and with a view to implementing the mandate entrusted to him in resolution 48/213, the Secretary-General has taken a number of steps aimed at enhancing economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people.

3. In early September 1993, when news of the breakthrough in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations became public, the Secretary-General established a high-level task force to identify new activities and projects that could be rapidly implemented by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations agencies with an established presence in the occupied territories. These activities would be carried out in addition to the agencies' regular programmes and would be launched as soon as funding was secured. The report of the task force, which identified immediate additional needs for the Palestinian people, assessed at $138 million, was circulated at the Conference to Support Middle East Peace, convened by the United States and the Russian Federation as co-sponsors of the peace process, at Washington, D.C., on 1 October 1993. Conference participants acknowledged that, in view of its extensive operations in the area, the United Nations would be an effective channel for such assistance, especially in the short-term. In the nine months since the Conference, UNRWA and UNDP have received donor commitments of $86 and $42 million, respectively, representing more than 90 per cent of the funds requested.

4. In addition to implementing projects that would have an immediate impact on the economy of the West Bank and Gaza, thereby generating new employment, with a resulting multiplier effect, the Secretary-General has been committed to the strengthening of Palestinian institutions, in particular those which will

support the Palestinian Authority. On 14 September 1993, the day after the signing of the Declaration of Principles, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO, Mr. Yasser Arafat, in a meeting with the Secretary-General, requested United Nations technical assistance in a variety of sectors, in particular for building the Palestinian administration to be entrusted with the tasks of self-government. He subsequently requested, in a letter to the Secretary-General dated 10 December 1993, United Nations assistance in training the Palestinian police force envisaged in the Declaration of Principles.

5. In response to those requests, the Secretary-General dispatched, in October 1993, a technical mission to Tunis and the occupied territories, for consultations with the Palestinian leadership. The mission also met with senior officials in Egypt, Jordan and Israel. The parties welcomed the intention of the Secretary-General to ensure a unified and coherent approach in the provision of economic, social and other assistance in the occupied territories. The mission also met with representatives of the United Nations agencies and programmes in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as the World Bank team that was visiting the area at the time. In the light of the findings of the mission, the Secretary-General was persuaded of the need to appoint a high-level personality who would serve as a focal point for all United Nations economic, social and other assistance to the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

6. In that connection, the Secretary-General followed closely the negotiations during the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly on the draft resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people, which, for the first time, was adopted by consensus. Paragraphs 7 and 10 of resolution 48/213, which emphasize the need for coordinated work by the programmes and agencies of the United Nations system, strengthened his conviction that, given the complexity and sensitivity of the situation in the region and the multiplicity of actors outside the United Nations system that would be involved during the transitional phase, it would be necessary to establish a specific mechanism to ensure effective coordination and intensification of United Nations assistance to the Palestinian people to meet their immediate and longer-term needs.

7. On 28 May 1994, the Secretary-General announced the appointment of Ambassador Terje Roed Larsen of Norway as Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories. The announcement was made within weeks of the 4 May signing at Cairo by Israel and the PLO of the agreement on Gaza and Jericho, which represents the first phase of implementation of the Declaration of Principles. A copy of the agreement, which is over 200 pages long, was officially conveyed to the Secretary-General on 27 May 1994 and is being issued as part of an official document under the symbol A/49/180-S/1994/727.

8. Mr. Larsen made an initial visit to the occupied territories from 15 to 23 June, during which he met representatives of the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and Jericho, as well as Palestinian representatives from throughout the occupied territories, in a meeting at Orient House in East Jerusalem. During his stay, he also met with the Foreign Minister of Israel, Mr. Shimon Peres, and senior officials in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The visit provided an opportunity for extensive field visits to United Nations projects throughout the West Bank and Gaza, and consultations with local representatives of UNRWA, UNDP,

UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO). Following his stay in the occupied territories, Mr. Larsen visited Tunis, where he met Chairman Arafat and other senior PLO officials.

9. On 29 June 1994, the Secretary-General convened an inter-agency meeting of 17 organizations of the United Nations system to discuss their current or prospective assistance to the Palestinian people and to lay the groundwork for a mode of operations under the overall guidance of the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories. Participants in the meeting agreed on the need for an integrated and coherent approach in providing United Nations economic, social and other assistance in the occupied territories. The meeting is being followed up by bilateral contacts between the Special Coordinator and the heads of relevant United Nations programmes and specialized agencies, particularly those which, for the first time, are about to launch programmes in the area.

10. With respect to Chairman Arafat's request for United Nations assistance in training the Palestinian police force, the Secretariat, together with representatives of France, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, have set up a training programme for future instructors of the police force. The programme was submitted to the PLO in May 1994. The Special Coordinator received a positive response regarding the package during his meeting with Chairman Arafat at Tunis on 24 June.

11. As the Special Coordinator has just begun to undertake his new functions and will establish residence in the occupied territories only in August, it has not yet been possible for him to assess the assistance actually received by the Palestinian people, to assess the needs still unmet and to make specific proposals for responding effectively to them, as called for in paragraph 11 of resolution 48/213. A report on the matter will be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session during the autumn.